

## Vanesa at Community Action Project of Tulsa County, Inc. CareerAdvance

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Vanesa Mares came to CareerAdvance, part of the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) funded by the Administration of Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance, at age 19. She was the mother of two children and the wife of a young man who was working on completing work toward his high school diploma. Though she had her first baby while she was in high school, she managed to graduate a year early, with the help of daycare in the school and babysitting support from her family.

Her only previous employment had been shelving books in a library, but Vanesa knew she wanted to be a nurse after she experienced the kindness of nurses when she was a scared teenager delivering her first baby. She says, "My nurses were so nice to me and comforted me and just wanted to make sure that me and my baby were safe. That is what I hope to do for someone: I want them to know that I'm there to comfort them and not look down on them, make sure they are safe and comfortable along with their baby." When Vanesa saw a flyer for CareerAdvance, she "knew it was a sign; it was perfect."

Vanesa began her journey with CareerAdvance in January 2011 as a member of Cohort #3 following the nursing track. She has completed the CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) 1-3 and Patient Care Technician studies and is currently enrolled in Tulsa Community College, taking nursing prerequisite classes. She has earned her CNA certificate and the Geriatric Technician certificate, and she has been using her healthcare skills in a home health job while earning these certificates.

She says, "I'm so thankful for this program, such a huge blessing in my and my family's life. Everyone I have met here has been so encouraging. I have new friends that are going through the same struggles as I, and together we can help one another."

In the future, Vanesa says, "I desire to be an RN (Registered Nurse) and work my way to BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing). It'll take time, but it'll be so worth it!" She has started on a career path that promises to help her fulfill her goal of providing for her family.

## **Cortney at Community Action Project of Tulsa County CareerAdvance®**

Cortney is a sweet and peppy young woman who works hard to achieve her goals. As a single mom to four-year-old Jaiden, she knows the importance of an education that allows her to obtain employment with a life-sustaining wage to improve her daughter's future. When Cortney saw the CareerAdvance® flyer in Jaiden's Head Start center and attended an information session, she knew that CareerAdvance® would give her this educational opportunity.

Cortney applied to CareerAdvance® and was accepted as part of its Health Information Technology Track. The track would allow her to meet her goal of working in a physician's office or hospital by becoming a Medical Assistant, then a Medical Coder, and then a Health Information Technologist. This situation seemed perfect because she had been searching for the right opportunity to go to college. CareerAdvance® training fit with her daughter's school schedule and also helped with childcare expenses when classes or clinical days were required outside of Jaiden's regular school hours.

Soon after she began her CareerAdvance® classes at Tulsa Technology Center, Cortney began to have a series of medical issues. When she first discussed the health situation with her career coach, she was nervous and discouraged because she thought she would be unable to continue with the CareerAdvance® program. After several discussions, she was relieved to know that the CareerAdvance® staff would work with her through these concerns.

Scheduling surgeries over the school break gave her opportunity to rest at home. Cortney was at her weekly partner meeting the Monday morning following spring break. She was in quite a bit of pain and could barely walk, but she was determined not to miss any classes or meetings. After her full recovery, she was back into the swing of her regular routine. Cortney completed the Medical Assisting program in July 2012 with a 3.90 grade point average. She successfully passed the Registered Medical Assistant and Phlebotomy exam in August 2012.

Currently, Cortney is pregnant with a baby girl due in December of 2012. Her initial goal was to work as a Medical Assistant, but since she has had additional medical issues, her doctor has recommended that she postpone working until after the baby is born. She plans to work then and to continue her next educational step, medical coding, in August 2013.

This past year has been very challenging for Cortney. There have been several times that she has thought about giving up, but through all her strife and struggles she remains positive and driven to complete her education, not only for herself but also for her two daughters. This mom's story is an inspiration to everyone who is working toward a better life.